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ABSTRACT

The concept of sight-based leadership, a process of universities and public schools working together to improve professional preparation programs and public schooling is explored in this paper. Sight-based leadership, which should be carefully distinguished from site-based management, is concerned with matters of vision with regard to educational program evaluation and development; building compromise, consensus, and coalition; and generating a sense of dignity in the way professionals relate to one another as they carry out their educational functions. The need for and values of a collaborative relationship between the university and public schools is examined, and ways in which departments of educational administration should participate in school restructuring are described. Set in the context of a traditional power relationship, the reality of the difficulties in establishing meaningful and productive collaboration is discussed. Recent efforts by the School of Education at Indiana State University to establish a collaborative model of teacher education involving a local school district and the university are described. A conclusion is that successful collaborative relationships are based on sharing knowledge, addressing problems of practice, generating real-world inquiry, and developing support networks that secure resources. (LMI)

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SIGHT BASED LEADERSHIP: WORKING TOGETHER TO IMPROVE PROFESSIONAL PREPARATION PROGRAMS AND PUBLIC SCHOOLING

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SIGHT BASED LEADERSHIP: WORKING TOGETHER TO IMPROVE PROFESSIONAL PREPARATION PROGRAMS AND PUBLIC SCHOOLING

"Am I a builder who works with care,
Measuring life by the rule and square?
Am I shaping my deeds to a well-made plan,
Patiently doing the best I can?
Or am I a wrecker who walks the town,
Content with the labor of tearing down?
Author Unknown

It was in 1973 that I began serving as elementary principal and chief spokesperson for the Board of School Trustees in negotiations with the Union for the development of a Master Contract between the parties. I had been carefully and appropriately taught by university and administrative "mentors" to be an efficient and effective manager of the school site. However, I was trying to be more than a site based manager! I was trying to provide "sight based leadership" on matters of vision to impact educational program evaluation and development; building compromise, coalition and consensus for staff decision making on the operation of the enterprise; and generating a sense of human dignity in the way professionals relate to one another as they carry out their educational functions in concert with one another. The 13 day teacher strike in 1976 was cause for a personal reexamination of the way teachers and administrators view the place we call school. This reexamination continues to this day and includes considerations for the preparation of administrative practitioners as well as developing a university faculty commitment to relate directly to the schools. Sight

based leadership is, it seems to me, preferable to site based management.

The purpose of this paper is to explore a concept of "sight based leadership" (not site based management) as a process of universities and public schools working together to improve professional preparation programs as well as public schooling. It will examine the need for and values of a collaborative relationship between the university and public schools and how departments of educational administration should be involved in a restructuring of what has been, too often, separately functioning institutions. Set in the context of a traditional power relationship, the reality of the difficulties in establishing meaningful and productive collaboration will be discussed. The example used in the paper is drawn from recent efforts by the School of Education, Indiana State University, to establish a collaborative model of teacher education involving a local school district and the university.

In 1990 the Board of Trustees at Indiana State University challenged the School of Education administration and faculty to make its existing "lab school" a financially self-supporting operation or abandon its efforts to provide this form of on campus, clinical teacher training. The sense was that it was an expensive teacher training tool that was at best marginal in terms of productive outcomes for future teachers. Rather than view this edict as the end, Dean Gail Huffman-Joley and her task force set about the literature of American educational reform and

after considerable brainstorming concluded that education is at a critical juncture that:

> ...makes it imperative for teacher preparation to focus not only on developing individuals who are effective classroom teachers, but additionally on developing individuals who have the ability to work as a team with administrators, other teachers, families, and community leaders.

The redesign of the lab school, they concluded, "must occur within the context of what is state-of-the-art knowledge that guides the development of effective teacher education programs in a democratic society and what is best practice for the children that the teacher education students are preparing to teach." Their proposal to the Board of Trustees and the local school district sought to fundamentally alter roles and relationships of the present faculty and staff of the current lab school, departments within the School of Education, other campus units, and the local school district. The theme of the design was collaboration between the university and the public schools.

Drawing heavily from The Holmes Group Report (1986), the Carnegie Report (1986), and John Goodlad's (1990) studies in teacher education, the task force proposed a Professional Development Center (PDC) where universities and public schools work together to provide higher levels of learning for all children, better environments for educating prospective teachers and sites of inquiry and renewal for experienced school teachers, administrators, and university faculty. The PDC would:

* prepare future teachers through state-of-the-art knowledge and practice.
* increase collaboration among clinical and university

faculty, public school teachers and administrators, families, and the community at large.

* support inquiry, research, and professional development.
* provide for continuing education, renewal and professional growth for all participants.
* ensure reasonable input and control from the University balanced with shared responsibility assumed by all other participants.

The rationale for a professional development center, while including many tenets of sound practice for effective collaboration between school personnel, college departments of education, and local school districts, surfaced the realization that universities cannot depend with any certainty on traditional relationships to help fulfill the public school's role in teacher education programs. School boards, superintendents, and bargaining units change resulting in changes in policies, politics, and programs. Thus, the continuity and effectiveness of university programs can be adversely affected. The view that university faculty have something of worth to share with elementary and secondary school faculties and administrators was not endorsed in terms of a commitment of fiscal resources by the local district's administrators. Further, what the proposal writers didn't anticipate was that the Board of Trustees of the university would turn down the plan for the professional development center stating that the university should not be, "In the public school business." The action by the Board created the awareness that all isn't right within our own house in terms of an appreciation for the values of collaboration for the

improvement of education and teacher training.

The above scenario, I believe, highlights the need for departments of educational administration, through the preparation of school leaders and working with university faculty and administration to provide an understanding of sight based leadership as it relates to the values of collaboration between public schools and universities. That is, of course, if you believe as I do that collaboration is a key to successful teacher preparation, administrator preparation, and an ongoing productive focus of knowledge toward the enhancement of public education and educators in general. I would argue that sight, as in a vision for the future, and leadership, as opposed to mere managing the status quo of institutions, is what departments like ours should be about both at the school and the university levels.

As teachers of leadership, we should take the lead in collaborative endeavors. That includes being in the field and bringing the field to us. It can be operationalized through principal intern programs, doctoral residency programs for practitioners, development of conferences and continuing education activities on contemporary issues that includes practitioners and university faculty as both audience and presenters, involving students in graduate program revision and in the screening and selecting of new Department faculty, and research activities on behalf of schools that address questions for which they need practical solutions.

I would offer the following areas from which tenets for

collaboration and a vision of leadership from our Departments should emerge.

SHARED KNOWLEDGE
PROBLEMS OF PRACTICE
REAL WORLD INQUIRY
SUPPORT NETWORKS
SECURING RESOURCES

Clearly the knowledge base of sound educational practice is dynamic. In addition, expectations for the educational enterprise, from both internal and external publics, are being offered at such a rate that no one of us can be knowledgeable enough to train professionals or lead schools by ourself. Postman and Weingarten (1973, pg. 17) in The School Book state:

> "It is best to acknowledge, at the outset, that school serves many masters, yields to many constraints, has many items on its agenda, and therefore cannot always concentrate its resources on assisting an individual in educating himself. Thus, to be schooled is not the same thing as to be educated."

We need each other and the benefits that sharing knowledge can give to being schooled and being educated.

It is the role of university faculty to provide a synthesis of modern inquiry in understandable and usable ways for the practitioner. We must address the "problems of practice" by first hand knowledge of what's going on in schools and how to truly make them better. It is the responsibility of teachers to constantly upgrade their knowledge and skills but at the same time provide university faculty with viable direction for inquiry into what they need to know about education and schooling to do a better job. Anything short of that becomes esoteric nonsense.

Educators at all levels need support networks between the

university and schools to bring direction and continuity to the improvement of education. Both the school and the university are public places. Their employees are public employees with a common purpose. Support for one another in their daily challenges should produce a public institution more responsive to the needs of those they serve.

Lastly, we need to secure resources together rather than fight for our territories at the expense of someone else. In short we need to approach the business of education from the old fashioned notion of team work, not turf.

In response to the question, "What concerns you most about the preparation of school administrators today," a colleague responded with an informed discussion of moving paradigms. I responded with the statement, "I don't know all I should about moving paradigms, but I am concerned about the alligators that bit them in the ass." Somewhere between the moving paradigms and the alligators rests the need for all in the educational enterprise to realize that we need each other. Through collaboration we can bring to focus a shared knowledge for the productive future of education. Through collaboration we can set aside territorial issues that are divisive rather than constructive. Through collaboration we can deal with personal needs and institutional needs in mutually productive ways. Through collaboration we can share a vision for leadership and not just manage school sites as we have for too long. Departments of Educational Administration need to be major

players in "sight based leadership." The place to begin is in the development of collaborative relationships based on sharing knowledge, addressing the problems of practice, generating real world inquiry, and developing support networks that secure resources for both institutions in concert with each other.